Federal prisoners rebel nationwide - media whiteout in effect!!

T/SOR/4A/5/2/14

Congress Votes Down Changing Crack Laws
Prisoners Rebel

What's it all about? - What can be done?

In February, the US Sentencing Commission recommended that sentencing for crack cocaine, which sends predominantly Black and Latino people to prison, to be changed. At the end of October, the US Congress voted down changing the laws for first time crack offenders by a margin of 332 to 89. With over 500 recommendations approved, this is the first time that Congress over-ruled the Sentencing Commission's recommendation. President Clinton then immediately signed this bill (Senate Bill 1245) into law. Meanwhile, the US Supreme Court has ruled that it will hear an appeal of a case involving allegations that Los Angeles prosecutors selectively prosecuted Blacks on crack cocaine trafficking charges.

Currently 5 grams of crack which has a street value of $225 gets a mandatory 5 year sentence. By comparison, 500 grams of powder cocaine, which has a street value of $50,000 gets a maximum of 5 years in prison or as low as probation. This means that hose arrested and convicted of crack possession get a 100% higher sentence than those convicted of powder cocaine possession.

14,000 of 90,000 federal prisoners are serving time under the crack laws; 88.3% are Black, 7.1% are Latino and 4.1% are white.

The Sentencing Project recently came out with statistics stating that 1 out of 3 Black men in the US are under some form of judicial restriction: jail, prison, probation or parole. In Washington D.C, the statistics is 46% -- almost 1 out of 2 and in Baltimore, the statistic is even higher at 52% -- 1 out of every 2 Black men. In New York State 91% of the prison population comes from 7 boroughs in New York City; these boroughs are predominately Black, Latino and poor. A New York state study done by the Drug Enforcement Agency, found that 71% of the people who use drugs and 56% who sell drugs are from white, middle class. Yet, 91% of people who are in prison for drug related crimes are Black and Latino (41% Latino, 50% black). Even the government's own statistics show the racist inequality of the crack laws.

What Happened in the Prisons

Immediately following Congress' voting down changes to the crack laws prisoners at 5 federal prisons rebelled. Following the first rebellions, the Bureau of Prisons instituted an entire system lock-down: This is the first time the BOP has ever done this. Here is a listing of the prisons and any information that could be compiled about what happened there and what we know of their status now:

1. **Talledega. AL**

This was the first prison to rebel. 12 prisoners and guards were injured. One of the fire fighters at the scene told CNN "It was like a war zone. There were gunshots going off and some explosions going and you had helicopters overhead."

2. **Terminal Island, CA**

No real information.

3. **Lompoc, CA**

There have been many unconfirmed rumors. The most concerning is that there was a hostage taken. It is assumed that it is still locked-down.

4. **McKean, PA**

October 24 - Prisoners seized and controlled 4 cell blocks where over 300 prisoners are caged for over 7 hrs. Fires were lit, appliances were destroyed and furniture tossed out windows. It is assumed that they are still locked-down.

5. **Allenwood, PA**

Prisoners refused to return to their cells. This ccurred in the FCI. The maximum security prison was being slowly lifted off of lock-down and was returning to normal.

6. **Lewisburg, PA**

October 24 - several prisoners refused to lock-in in one of the lower security units. The riot squad tear gassed, cuffed and dragged out the entire unit, two floors of an adjacent unit and anyone caught on videotape in windows. They proceeded to clear out another housing unit, strip the cells of mattresses, shelves, desks, anything wooden and create a segregation unit.

They have begun to cut food slots in the door, presumably to make this into a permanent seg unit. The entire prison was locked-down.

November 1 - housing units were being let out to have hot meals and yard time one at a time and the lock-Down was slowly being lifted. After the evening meal several units planned to go on a work strike the following day.

There has been no contact with Lewisburg since then. They are on total lock-down. No personal phone calls or visits, no legal calls unless there is a court date within 2 weeks and legal visits are restricted to W,T,F 12-2.

7. Leavenworth, KS

There was a fire in the library of the maximum security prison. All of the guards from the LVC were working 12 hour shifts. As of November 2 they were still locked-down but visits were allowed.

8. Pekill, IL

This is a woman's prison. There is not much information available about what happened.

9. Dublin, CA

October 23, the women were forced to go to work after being locked-down in BOP wide lock-down. The prisoners became angry and began boycotting meals.

Monday night several trash cans were set on fire. Within 1/2 hour all the prisoners were again locked into their cells. An investigation was begun and women were sent to the hole. Paul Laird, Ex. Assistant to the Warden issued a statement on November 1: In part it said: "There was a general lock down to restrict movement on October 20. On October 23, two trash cans were set afire. People were charged with a number of incidents including refusal to leave areas, refusal to go to their rooms, 'insolence' and 'arson.'"

10. Memphis, TN

Over 50 prisoners and guards were treated for smoke inhalation and $5 million damage

11. El Reno, OK

No real information

12. Greenville, IL.

No real information

13. Mariana, FL

Rumors are that they are locked-down because of a work strike.

14. Atlanta, GA

No information on rebellion. They apparently went on a work strike and the prison is completely locked-down: rumors have ranged from 3 weeks to 6 months.

15. Raybrook, NY

Rumor was that they used stun guns to put down whatever happened in the prison.

16. Fairton, NJ

No real information.

17. Springfield, IL

No real information.

18. Florence, CO

Report in local paper of fires in the medium security prison.

MEDIA WHITE-OUT OF PRISON UPRISISNGS

There has been almost a total black out by the BOP on what is happening at the prisons. Most information is coming through visits and telephone calls.

There is a startling lack of almost any coverage in the media. And, even more frightening is the lack of concern and knowledge within the left and progressive movements. It is imperative that we know what happens inside of the prisons and that we are able to get the information out. We need to demand that the media cover what is going on and WHY these prisons are rebelling. Enclosed is a list of contacts that do prison work. It is important that we have accurate accountings of what happened in each prison. And even more so, it is important that we communicate and share information with each other.

If you have any information on other prisons or what had been happening in the ones we already have listed, please contacts us so that we can update the information.

Mary Taylor
Political Prisoners Unite
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Jersey City, NJ 07307
(201) 420-9434
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Other Contacts:

Bonnie Kerness, AFSC
972 Broad St. 6th FL.
Newark, NJ
201-643-3192

Arm The Spirit
PO Box 6326 Station A
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M5WIP7
ats@etext.org

Prison Activist Resource Center
PO Box 3201
Berkeley, CA 94703
510-845-8813
prisondesk@igc.apc.org

Rocky Mountain Peace Center
1523 6th Street
Boulder, Co 80302
303-444-6523

Committee To End the Marion Lockdown
PO Box 578172
Chicago. IL 60657

Things To Do:

Write President Bill Clinton,
White House, 1600
Pennsylvania Ave,
Washington, D.C. 20500
202-456-1414 fax 202-456-2883

Call your local congress persons to find out how and why they voted the way they did.

Write Janet Reno
Attorney General,
U.S. Department of Justice
Main Justice Building
Room 5111,
10th and Constitutional Ave,
Washington, D.C. 20530
202-514-2000 fax 202-514-0468

Write Kathleen Hawk,
Director Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 1st Street, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20534
202-307-3250 fax 202-514-6878

Call the nearest federal prison near you and find out what has happened there.

Contact your local media for unbiased coverage, write letters to the editors, etc.

Talk to people about the rebellions, the crack laws, the fact that over 1 million people are in prison in the US!

please post, forward, distribute -- and

TAKE ACTION TO DEMAND PRISONER'S RIGHTS!

From Political Prisoners Unite --->

Update on Lewisburg Penitentiary

On November 1, several prisoners (about 10) created a disturbance in the mess hall. They had been drinking, took a case of soda from a guard and barricaded themselves into one of the dorms. They then proceeded to take a pipe from a floor fan and create a cannon with a cue ball. When the riot squad stormed the dorm, the prisoners fired the 'cannon' at them. The pool ball went through a chicken-wire enforced window of a door. The prisoners then soaped the floors and turned the fire-houses on the riot squad.

The riot squad turned off the water and tear-gassed the ENTIRE unit. They then proceeded to beat and drag out every prisoner from the unit, despite the fact that only 10 prisoners were involved. The riot squad beat prisoners so badly that OVER 20 PRISONERS were sent to the hospital. One prisoner had 5 teeth knocked out and had his collar bone and arm broken. He was not one of the 10 prisoners that started this.

After they had all of the prisoners handcuffed and stripped naked, they had them lay on the floor for **18 hours**. Men were deficating on themselves because if they spoke they were kicked in the head. Almost the entire unit was transferred.

After this, the warden went to all of the different leaders of the communities in the prison and asked them to have a meeting, amongst themselves, to try and calm the situation down. There was talk about a workstrike, but also mainly younger prisoners were heading towards serious violence. The leaders of the different communities met for hours and came out of the meeting with the decsion to take back to all of the different units to have a workstrike. The ONLY demand that they had of the prison officials was to ensure that the prisoners that had gotten hurt RECEIVED MEDICAL ATTENTION. That was the only thing that they wanted out of the workstrike. It was really a compromise because many prisoners were so angry that the threat of a serious riot was very real.

The men at the meeting then went back to the units and held meetings. One prisoner said that out of 200 prisoners in his unit, 190 attended that meeting. He said that after 11 years in prison, he had NEVER seen such unity in prison. They men met calmly, talked about the situation and tried to resolve it to ensure that the others who had gotten hurt were taken care of.

What followed is a clear example of what prison officials are capable of. The warden immediately locked-down the entire prison. EVERY MAN who was at the meeting (the meeting that the warden ASKED them to have) was put in the hole and the majority of them were already transferred. Those who lead the meetings in the units were also put in the hole and transferred. The prison has already transferred 400 prisoners and more are being transferred daily.

The riot squad would walk up and down the units at night with flashlights and pull people out of their cells. The prison was CLEARLY intimidated by the unity of these men and responded in the ONLY way they are capable -- senseless violence and punishment.

There are several of the community leaders (including political prisoners) that remain in the hole in Lewisburg. Lewisburg is off of their lock-down and visits have been resumed, unless you were placed in the hole.

It is important to know what prison officials do to these men. It is important to let the prison officials know that we know.

WHAT TO DO:

CALL -- FAX -- WRITE THE WARDEN AT LEWISBURG

- LET HIM KNOW THAT PEOPLE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED THERE
- LET HIM KNOW THAT PEOPLE KNOW HOW GUARDS BEAT PRISONERS
- LET HIM KNOW THAT THOSE STILL IN THE HOLE SHOULD BE RELEASED BACK INTO POPULATION

Warden J.D. Lamar
P.O. Box 1000
Lewisburg, PA 17837
phone (717) 523-1251
fax 717-524-5805

Also contact:
Janet Reno, Attorney General,
U.S. Department of Justice
Main Justice Building, Room 5111,
10th and Constitution Ave, Washington, D.C. 20530
202 - 514-2000 fax 202- 514-0468

Kathleen Hawk,
Director Federal Bureau of Prisons
320 1st Street, NW,
Washington, D.C. 20534
202 - 307-3250 fax 202 --514-6878

Date: Wed, 15 Nov 1995
From the Prison Activist Resource Center wtih the NLG Prison Law Project -->

Recently, we posted a news item concerning the many uprisings/riots in Federal prisons across the US that happened in the last month. In response, the Prison Law Project provided some context by detailing numerous rebellions that happened throughout the year, prior to those sparked by the racist sentencing laws for crack vs. powder cocaine. Here's a rundown:

12-14-95: Indiana State Prison, IN: disturbance-guard killed in retaliation of state's execution of Ajamu Nassor (Gregory Resnover)--Khalfani Khaldun, who has a long political history, charged with the murder (verified by newspapers)

January through June 1995: 10 guards stabbed in CA State
prisons (verified)

3-20-95: WA, a strike on 3-20-95 over prison conditions, 11
others were placed as leaders in the Control Unit, 500 prisoners took part & at other prisons in Washington-over proposed prison legislation (verified by newspapers)

Spring 1995: CSP-Lancaster, CA-strike, largely over the pending legislation of eliminating family visits (several prisoners and families verified, no media coverage); Department of Justice investigates CSP-Corcoran for abuse of prisoners (verified by newspapers); women refused to get off bus when they were transported from CIW at Frontera, CA to the new women's instiution, Valley State Corr. Fac. at Chowchilla (outside verification)

5-5-95: CSP-Calipatria, eight guards were injured when five inmates armed with knives stormed a prison office (verified by newspapers)

7-95: Parchman, MS, 150-300 riot, (verified by Newspaper
accounts & prisoner & outside)

7-14-95: PA Detention Center, at least 30 guards and prisoners were injured, more than 300 prisoners seized and held a cell block for two hours, heat humidity and a lack of air conditioning were cited a: the reasons for the rebellion (PLN, Oct. 19[illegible]

7-95: Attica, Sing Sing, Auburn, Comstock, Clinton strikes, no work, no eating, shut down major industries

7-95: Govenour Correctional Facility, riot, 350 prisoners

8-95: Shirley, MA, riot

8-14-95: Coal Township Prison Shamokin, PA, several dozen prisoners rioted during lunch. fifteen guards were injured tying to break it up, prison placed on lockdown. (PLN, Oct. 1995)

8-7-95: TCPenit., Only, TN -970 involved in a strike & refused to work

9-25-95: NY Fishkill riots, 2 killed

9-25-95: Clallam Bay, WA, riot, guards taken hostage refusal to work